Copa Jerez - matching sherry to food

22 Sep 2011 by Jancis Robinson

See Friday's Wine of the week.

On Tuesday I had the huge pleasure of being one of five judges of Copa Jerez, a biennial competition in the sherry town (still basking in high temperatures) to find ideal matches between sherry and food.

The contestants comprised pairs of sommeliers and chefs from establishments that won the qualifying heats in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Spain and the US. (The chef from the Saltyard, the UK entrant, was prevented from competing by a last-minute accident, alas.)

The UK (Notting Hill Brasserie and Number One restaurant in Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel) had won the first two competitions. Dutch restaurant De Lindenhof won the third. But there was huge jubilation at the awards ceremony when it was announced that the runaway winner of this year's competition was from... Spain! Not a famous Michelin-starred establishment but Casablanca in El Taller, Murcia, whose team was hugely impressive.

More detail to follow but in the meantime see the panel of judges above (left to right: Sommelier Pontus Elofsson of Noma in Copenhagen, Julian Serrano of the Bellagio in Las Vegas, Jordi Roca of Can Roca in Girona, chairman of judges Juli Soler of El Bulli, *et moi*).

As you can see from the first film, the locals were thrilled by the win, announced by the mayoress of Jerez.

Below that is a short film of the Dutch sommelier Ronald Opten of the restaurant La Rive in the Amsterdam Intercontinental. See their main course of veal cheek on carrot smudge at the end - served with an Amontillado del Puerto from Lustau's Almacenista collection, Lustau having supplied no fewer than six of the 18 sherries served.

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